

The first test of the Abraham Accords

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The recent round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, and especially the events that preceded it in Jerusalem, were the first significant test of the Arab-Israeli normalization agreements signed in 2020. Saved by Hamas' intervention, the four normalizing Arab governments were nevertheless forced to address the consequences of their agreement in the face of popular discontent with the situation at home as well as criticism from other Arab and Muslim states over their relative silence. How they respond to the evolving Israeli-Palestinian tension going forward will be critical not only in regard to their own relations with Israel but also in terms of the future path of Arab-Israeli normalization.

At the outset of the recent upsurge in Israeli-Palestinian conflict, governments in the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, confronting vocal discontent about the situation among their own populations, criticized Israel. They blamed Israel and empathized with the Palestinians over what was happening in Jerusalem, reflecting their perception of the "violation of Palestinian rights and the sanctity of al-Aqsa." The fact that the confrontations over Israeli actions in Sheikh Jarrah and on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount occurred during Ramadan, especially on its holiest day, Lailat al-Qadr, only amplified Arab and Muslim anger. Thus, the four states were under pressure to show solidarity with the Palestinians after being accused of turning their backs on them when they originally agreed to normalize relations with Israel.

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